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No. 12 The Edda: I. The Divine Mythology of the North.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some explanation is needed of the form of spelling I have adopted in transcribing Norse proper names. The spirants þ *and* ð *are represented by* th *and* d, *as being more familiar to readers unacquainted with the original. Marks of vowel-length are in all cases omitted. The inflexional* -r *of the nominative singular masculine is also omitted, whether it appears as* -r *or is assimilated to a preceding consonant (as in Ódinn, Eysteinn, Heindall, Egill) in the Norse form, with the single exception of the name Tyr, where I use the form which has become conventional in English.*

MANCHESTER,
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THE EDDA:

I. THE DIVINE MYTHOLOGY OF THE NORTH

THE Icelandic Eddas are the only vernacular record of Germanic heathendom as it developed during the four centuries which in England saw the destruction of nearly all traces of the heathen system. The so-called Elder Edda is a collection of some thirty poems, mythic and heroic in substance, interspersed with short pieces of prose, which survives in a thirteenth-century MS., known as the Codex Regius, discovered in Iceland in 1642; to these are added other poems of similar character from other sources. The Younger Edda is a prose paraphrase of, and commentary on, these poems and others which are lost, together with a treatise on metre, written by the historian Snorri Sturluson about 1220.

This use of the word Edda is incorrect and unhistorical, though convenient and sanctioned by the use of several centuries. It was early used as a general term for the rules and materials for versemaking, and applied in this sense to Snorri's

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work. When the poems on which his paraphrase is founded were discovered, Icelandic scholars by a misunderstanding applied the name to them also; and as they attributed the collection quite arbitrarily to the historian Saemund (1056–1133), it was long known as Saemundar Edda, a name now generally discarded in favour of the less misleading titles of Elder or Poetic Edda. From its application to this collection, the word derives a more extended use, (1) as a general term for Norse mythology; (2) as a convenient name to distinguish the simpler style of these anonymous narrative poems from the elaborate formality of the Skalds.

The poems of the Edda are certainly older than the MS., although the old opinion as to their high antiquity is untenable. The majority probably date from the tenth century in their present form; this dating does not necessitate the ascription of the shape in which the legends are presented, still less of their substance, to that period. With regard to the place of their composition opinions vary widely, Norway, the British Isles and Greenland having all found champions; but the evidence is rather questionable, and I incline to leave them to the country which has preserved them. They are possibly of popular origin; this, together with their epic or narrative character, would account for the striking absence from them of some of the chief characteristics of Skaldic poetry: the obscuring of

the sense by the elaborate interlacing of sentences and the extensive use of kennings or mythological synonyms, and the complication of the metre by such expedients as the conjunction of end-rhyme with alliteration. Eddic verse is governed solely by the latter, and the strophic arrangement is simple, only two forms occurring: (1) couplets of alliterative short lines; (2) six-line strophes, consisting of a couplet followed by a single short line, the whole repeated.

Roughly speaking, the first two-fifths of the MS. is mythological, the rest heroic. I propose to observe this distinction, and to deal in this study with the stories of the Gods. In this connexion, Snorri's Edda and the mythical Ynglinga Saga may also be considered, but as both were compiled a couple of centuries or more after the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, it is uncertain how much in them is literary explanation of tradition whose meaning was forgotten; some also, especially in Snorri, is probably pure invention, fairy tale rather than myth.

Many attempts have been made to prove that the material of the Edda is largely borrowed. The strength and distinction of Icelandic poetry rest rather on the fact that it is original and national and, like that of Greece, owes little to foreign sources; and that it began in the heathen age, before Christian or Romantic influences had touched Iceland. Valuable as the early Christian poetry

of England is, we look in vain there for the humour, the large-minded simplicity of motive, the suggestive character-drawing, the swift dramatic action, which are as conspicuous in many poems in the Edda as in many of the Sagas.

Omitting the heroic poems, there are in Codex Regius the following: (1) Of a more or less comprehensive character, *Völuspa*, *Vafthrudnismal*, *Grimnismal*, *Lokasenna*, *Harbardsljod*; (2) dealing with episodes, *Hymiskvida*, *Thrymskvida*, *Skirnisför*. *Havamal* is a collection of proverbs, but contains two interpolations from mythical poems; *Alviismal*, which, in the form of a dialogue between Thor and a dwarf Alviss, gives a list of synonyms, is a kind of mythologico-poetical glossary. Several of these poems are found in another thirteenth-century vellum fragment, with an additional one, variously styled *Vegtamskvida* or *Baldr's Dreams*; the great fourteenth-century codex Flateybook contains *Hyndluljod*, partly genealogical, partly an imitation of *Völuspa*; and one of the MSS. of Snorri's Edda gives us *Rigsthula*.

Völuspa, though not one of the earliest poems, forms an appropriate opening. Metrical considerations forbid an earlier date than the first quarter of the eleventh century, and the last few lines are still later. The material is, however, older: the poem is an outline, in allusions often obscure to us, of traditions and beliefs familiar to its first hearers.

The very bareness of the outline is sufficient proof that the material is not new. The framework is apparently imitated from that of the poem known as *Baldr's Dreams*, some lines from which are inserted in *Völuspa*. This older poem describes Odin's visit to the Sibyl in hell-gates to inquire into the future. He rides down to her tomb at the eastern door of Nifl-hell and chants spells, until she awakes and asks: "What man unknown to me is that, who has troubled me with this weary journey? Snow has snowed on me, rain has beaten me, dew has drenched me, I have long been dead." He gives the name Wegtam, or Way-wise, and then follow question and answer until she discovers his identity and will say no more. In *Völuspa* there is no descriptive introduction, and no dialogue; the whole is spoken by the Sibyl, who plunges at once into her story, with only the explanatory words: "Thou, Valfather, wouldst have me tell the ancient histories of men as far as I remember." She describes the creation of the world and sky by Bor's sons; the building by the Gods of a citadel in Ida-plain, and their age of innocence till three giant-maids brought greed of gold; the creation of the dwarfs; the creation of the first man and woman out of two trees by Odin, Hoeni and Lodur; the world-ash and the spring beside it where dwell the three Norns who order the fates of men. Then follows an allusion to the

war between the Aesir and the Vanir, the battle with the giants who had got possession of the goddess Freyja, and the breaking of bargains; an obscure reference to Mimi's spring where Odin left his eye as a pledge; and an enumeration of his war-maids or Valkyries. Turning to the future, the Sibyl prophesies the death of Baldr, the vengeance on his slayer, and the chaining of Loki, the doom of the Gods and the destruction of the world at the coming of the fire-giants and the release of Loki's children from captivity. The rest of the poem seems to be later; it tells how the earth shall rise again from the deep, and the Aesir dwell once more in Odin's halls, and there is a suggestion of Christian influence in it which is absent from the earlier part.

Of the other general poems, the next four were probably composed before 950; in each the setting is different. *Vafthrudnismal*, a riddle-poem, shows Odin in a favourite position, seeking in disguise for knowledge of the future. Under the name of Gangrad (Wanderer), he visits the wise giant Vafthrudni, and the two agree to test their wisdom: the one who fails to answer a question is to forfeit his head. In each case the questions deal first with the past. Vafthrudni asks about Day and Night, and the river which divides the Giants from the Gods, matters of common knowledge; and then puts a question as to the future: "What is the

plain where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?" Odin replies, and proceeds to question in his turn; first about the creation of Earth and Sky, the origin of Sun and Moon, Winter and Summer, the Giants and the Winds; the coming of Njörd the Wane to the Aesir as a hostage; the Einherjar, or chosen warriors of Valhalla. Then come prophetic questions on the destruction of the Sun by the wolf Fenri, the Gods who shall rule in the new world after Ragnarök, the end of Odin. The poem is brought to a close by Odin's putting the question which only himself can answer: "What did Odin say in his son's ear before he mounted the pyre?" and the giant's head is forfeit.

In the third poem of this class, *Grimnismal*, a prose introduction relates that Odin and Frigg quarrelled over the merits of their respective foster-children. To settle the question, Odin goes disguised as Grimni, "the Hooded One," to visit his foster-son Geirröd; but Frigg, to justify her charge of inhospitality against Geirröd, sends her maiden Fulla to warn him against the coming stranger. Odin therefore meets with a harsh reception, and is bound between two fires in the hall. Geirröd's young son, Agnar, protests against this rude treatment, and gives wine to the guest, who then begins to instruct him in matters concerning the Gods. He names the halls of the Aesir, describes Valhalla and the ash Yggdrasil, the

Valkyries, the creation of the world (two stanzas in common with *Vafthrudnismal*), and enumerates his own names. The poem ends with impressive abruptness by his turning to Geirröd:

> "Thou art drunk, Geirröd, thou hast drunk too deep; thou art bereft of much since thou hast lost my favour, the favour of Odin and all the Einherjar. I have told thee much, but thou hast minded little. Thy friends betray thee: I see my friend's sword lie drenched in blood. Now shall Odin have the sword-weary slain; I know thy life is ended, the Fates are ungracious. Now thou canst see Odin: come near me, if thou canst."
>
> [Prose.] "King Geirröd sat with his sword on his knee, half drawn. When he heard that Odin was there, he stood up and would have led Odin from the fires. The sword slipt from his hand; the hilt turned downwards. The king caught his foot and fell forwards, the sword standing towards him, and so he met his death. Then Odin went away, and Agnar was king there long afterwards."

Harbardsljod is a dialogue, and humorous. Thor on his return from the east comes to a channel, at the farther side of which stands Odin, disguised as a ferryman, Greybeard. He refuses to ferry Thor across, and they question each other as to their past feats, with occasional threats from Thor and taunts from Odin, until the former goes off vowing vengeance on the ferryman:

> THOR. "Thy skill in words would serve thee ill if I waded across the water; I think thou wouldst cry

louder than the wolf, if thou shouldst get a blow from the hammer."

ODIN. "Sif has a lover at home, thou shouldst seek him. That is a task for thee to try, it is more proper for thee."

THOR. "Thou speakest what thou knowest most displeasing to me; thou cowardly fellow, I think that thou liest."

ODIN. "I think I speak true; thou art slow on the road. Thou wouldst have got far, if thou hadst started at dawn."

THOR. "Harbard, scoundrel, it is rather thou who hast delayed me."

ODIN. "I never thought a shepherd could so delay Asa-Thor's journey."

THOR. "I will counsel thee: row thy boat hither. Let us cease quarrelling; come and meet Magni's father."

ODIN. "Leave thou the river; crossing shall be refused thee."

THOR. "Show me the way, since thou wilt not ferry me."

ODIN. "That is a small thing to refuse. It is a long way to go: a while to the stock, and another to the stone, then keep to the left hand till thou reach Verland. There will Fjörgyn meet her son Thor, and she will tell him the highway to Odin's land."

THOR. "Shall I get there to-day?"

ODIN. "With toil and trouble thou wilt get there about sunrise, as I think."

THOR. "Our talk shall be short, since thou answerest with mockery. I will reward thee for refusing passage, if we two meet again."

ODIN. "Go thy way, where all the fiends may take thee."

Lokasenna also is in dialogue form. A prose introduction tells how the giant Oegi, or Gymi, gave a feast to the Aesir. Loki was turned out for killing a servant, but presently returned and began to revile the Gods and Goddesses, each one in turn trying to interfere, only to provoke a taunt from Loki. At last Thor, who had been absent on a journey, came in and threatened the slanderer with his hammer, whereupon Loki said, "I spoke to the Aesir and the sons of the Aesir what my mind told me; but for thee alone I will go away, for I know thou wilt strike." Some of the poem is rather pointless abuse, but much touches points already suggested in the other poems.

Hyndluljod is much later than the others, probably not before 1200. The style is late, and the form imitated from *Völuspa*. It describes a visit paid by Freyja to the Sibyl to learn the genealogy of her favourite Ottar. The larger part deals with heroic genealogies, but there are scanty allusions to Baldr, Frey, Heimdal, Loki's children, and Thor, and a Christian reference to a God who shall come after Ragnarök "when Odin shall meet the wolf." It tells nothing new.

We have here then, omitting *Hyndluljod*, five poems (four of them belonging to the first half of the tenth century) which suggest a general outline of Norse mythology: there is a hierarchy of Gods, the Aesir, who live together in a citadel, Odin

being the chief. Among them are several who are not Aesir by origin: Njörd and his son and daughter, Frey and Freyja, are Vanir; Loki is really an enemy and an agent in their fall; and there are one or two Goddesses of giant race. The giants are rivals and enemies to the Gods; the dwarfs are also antagonistic, but in bondage. The meeting-place of the Gods is by the World-Ash, Yggdrasil, on whose well-being the fate of Gods and men depends; at its root lies the World-Snake. The Gods have foreknowledge of their own doom, Ragnarök, the great fight when they shall meet Loki's children, the Wolf and the Snake; both sides will fall and the world be destroyed. An episode in the story is the death of Baldr. This we may assume to be the religion of the Viking age (800–1000 A.D.), a compound of the beliefs of various ages and tribes.

The Aesir.—The number of the Aesir is not fixed. *Hyndluljod* says there were twelve ("there were eleven Aesir when Baldr went down into the howe"). Snorri gives a list of fourteen Aesir or Gods (Odin, Thor, Baldr, Njörd, Frey, Tyr, Bragi, Heimdal, Höd, Vidar, Vali, Ullr, Forseti, Loki), and adds Hoeni in another list, all the fifteen occurring in the poems; and sixteen Goddesses (Asynjor), the majority of whom are merely personified epithets, occurring nowhere else. Of the sixteen, Frigg, Gefion, Freyja and Saga (really an

epithet only) are Goddesses in the poems, and Fulla is Frigg's handmaid. In another chapter, Snorri adds Idunn, Gerd, Sigyn and Nanna, of whom the latter does not appear in the Elder Edda, where Idunn, Gerd (a giantess) and Sigyn are the wives of Bragi, Frey and Loki; and two others, the giantess Skadi and Sif, are the wives of Njörd and Thor.

A striking difference from classical mythology is that neither Tyr (who should etymologically be the Sky-god), nor Thor (the Thunder-god), takes the highest place. Tyr is the hero of one important episode, the chaining of the Wolf, through which he loses his right hand. This is told in full by Snorri and alluded to in *Lokasenna*, both in the prose preface ("Tyr also was there, with only one hand; the Fenris-wolf had bitten off the other, when he was bound") and in the poem itself:

> LOKI. "I must remember that right hand which Fenri bit off thee."
>
> TYR. "I am short of a hand, but thou of the famous wolf; to each the loss is ill-luck. Nor is the wolf in better plight, for he must wait in bonds till Ragnarök."

Otherwise, he only appears in connexion with two more popular Gods: he speaks in Frey's defence in *Lokasenna*, and in *Hymiskvida* he is Thor's companion in the search for a cauldron; the latter poem represents him as a giant's son.

Thor, on the other hand, is second only to his

father Odin; he is the strongest of the Gods and their champion against the giants, and his antagonist at Ragnarök is to be the World-Snake. Like Odin, he travels much, but while the chief God generally goes craftily and in disguise, to gain knowledge or test his wisdom, Thor's errands are warlike; in *Lokasenna* he is absent on a journey, in *Harbardsljod* and *Alvissmal* he is returning from one. His journeys are always to the east; so in *Harbardsljod:* "I was in the east, fighting the malevolent giant-brides. . . . I was in the east and guarding the river, when Svarang's sons attacked me." The Giants live in the east (*Hymiskvida* 5); Thor threatened Loki: "I will fling thee up into the east, and no one shall see thee more" (*Lokasenna* 59); the fire-giants at Ragnarök are to come from the east: "Hrym comes driving from the east, he lifts his shield before him. . . . A ship comes from the east, Muspell's sons will come sailing over the sea, and Loki steers" (*Völuspa* 50, 51). It would not, perhaps, be overstraining the point to suggest that this is a reminiscence of early warfare between the Scandinavians and eastern nations, either Lapps and Finns or Slavonic tribes.

Thor is the God of natural force, the son of Earth. Two of the episodical poems deal with his contests with the giants. *Thrymskvida*, the story of how Thor won back his hammer, Mjöllni, from the giant Thrym, is the finest and one of the oldest

of the mythological poems; a translation is given in the appendix, as an example of Eddic poetry at its best. Loki appears as the willing helper of the Gods, and Thor's companion. The Thunderer's journey with Tyr in quest of a cauldron is related with much humour in *Hymiskvida:* Hymi's beautiful wife, who helps her guests to outwit her husband, is a figure familiar in fairy-tales as the Ogre's wife.

The chief God of the Scandinavians is, it must be confessed, an unsympathetic character. He is the head of the Valhalla system; he is Val-father (Father of the Slain), and the Valkyries are his "Wishmaidens," as the Einherjar are his "Wish-sons." He naturally takes a special interest in mortal heroes, from whom come the chosen hosts of Valhalla. But, in spite of the splendour of his surroundings, he is wanting in dignity. The chief of the Gods has neither the might and unthinking valour of Thor, nor the self-sacrificing courage of Tyr. He is a God who practises magic, and it is as Father of Spells that he is powerful. He is the wisest of the Gods in the sense that he remembers most about the past and foresees most about the future; yet he is powerless in difficulty without the craft of Loki and the hammer of Thor. He always wanders in disguise, and the stories told of him are chiefly love-adventures; this is true of all the deeds he mentions in *Harbardsljod*, and also of

the two interpolations in *Havamal*, though one of the two had an object, the stealing of the mead of inspiration from the giant Suptung, whose daughter Gunnlöd guarded it.

Völuspa makes him one of three creative deities, the other two being Lodur (probably Loki) and Hoeni, of whom nothing else is known except the story that he was given as hostage to the Vanir in exchange for Njörd. The same three Gods (Odin, Loki and Hoeni) are connected with the legend of the Nibelung treasure; and it was another adventure of theirs, according to Snorri, which led to the loss of Idunn.

Of the other Gods, Bragi is a later development; his name means simply king or chief, and his attributes, as God of eloquence and poetry, are apparently borrowed from Odin. Heimdal, the watchman and "far-seeing like the Vanir," who keeps guard on the rainbow bridge Bifröst, is represented in the curious poem *Rigsthula* as founder of the different social orders. He wandered over the world under the name of Rig, and from his first journey sprang the race of thralls, swarthy, crooked and broad-backed, who busied themselves with fencing land and tending goats and swine; from his second, the churls, fine and ruddy, who broke oxen, built houses and ploughed the land; from his third, the earls, yellow-haired, rosy, and keen-eyed, who broke horses and strung bows,

rode, swam, and hurled spears; and the youngest of the earls' race was Konung the king, who knew all mysteries, understood the speech of birds, could quench fire and heal wounds. Heimdal is said to be the son of nine mothers, and to have fought with Loki for Freyja's Brising-necklace. His horn is hidden under Yggdrasil, to be brought out at Ragnarök, when he will blow a warning blast. His origin is obscure. Still less is known of Vidar and Vali, two sons of Odin, one of whom is to avenge Baldr's death, the other to slay the wolf after it has swallowed up the chief God at Ragnarök. Thor's stepson Ullr (Glory) is probably, like his sons Modi and Magni (Wrath and Strength), a mere epithet.

Frigg, Odin's wife and the chief Goddess, daughter of Earth, is not very distinctly characterised, and is often confused with Freyja. Gefion should be the sea-goddess, since that seems to be the meaning of her name, but her functions are apparently usurped by the Wane Njörd; according to Snorri, she is the patron of those who die unwedded.

Baldr.—The story of Baldr is the most debated point in the Edda. The chief theories advanced are: (1) That it is the oldest part of Norse mythology, and of ritual origin; (2) that Baldr is really a hero transformed into a God; (3) that the legend

is a solar myth with or without Christian colouring; (4) that it is entirely borrowed from Mediæval Greek and Christian sources. This last theory is too ingenious to be credible; and with regard to the third, there is nothing essentially Christian in the chief features of the legend, while the solar idea leaves too much unexplained. The references to the myth in the Elder Edda are:

(1) *Vegtamskvida* (about 900 A.D.). Odin questions the Sibyl as to the meaning of Baldr's dreams:

> ODIN. "For whom are the benches (in hell) strewn with rings, the halls fairly adorned with gold?"
>
> SIBYL. "Here the mead, clear drink, stands brewed for Baldr; the shields are spread. The sons of the Aesir are too merry."
>
> ODIN. "Who will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life?"
>
> SIBYL. "Höd bears thither the high branch of fame: he will be Baldr's slayer and rob Odin's son of life."
>
> ODIN. "Who will avenge the deed on Höd and bring Baldr's slayer to the funeral pyre?"
>
> SIBYL. "Rind bears a son, Vali, in the halls of the west. He shall not wash his hands nor comb his hair till he bears Baldr's foe to the pyre."

(2) In *Lokasenna* Frigg says: "If I had a son like Baldr here in Oegi's halls, thou shouldst not pass out from the sons of the Aesir, but be slain here in thy anger"; to which Loki replies, "Wilt thou that I speak more ill words, Frigg? I am

the cause that thou wilt never more see Baldr ride into the hall."

(3) In *Vafthrudnismal* the only reference is Odin's question, "What said Odin in his son's ear when he mounted the pyre?"

(4) In *Völuspa* the Sibyl prophesies, "I saw doom threatening Baldr, the bleeding victim, the son of Odin. Grown high above the meadows stood the mistletoe, slender and fair. From this stem, which looked so slender, grew a fatal and dangerous shaft. Höd shot it, and Frigg wept in Fenhall over Valhall's woe." The following lines, on the chaining of Loki, suggest his complicity.

(5) *Hyndluljod* has one reference: "There were eleven Aesir by number when Baldr went down into the howe. Vali was his avenger and slew his brother's slayer."

Besides these there is a fragment quoted by Snorri: "Thökk will weep dry tears at Baldr's funeral pyre. I had no good of the old man's son alive or dead; let Hel keep what she has." *Grimnismal* assigns a hall to Baldr among the Gods.

There are, in addition, two prose versions of the story by later writers: the Icelandic version of Snorri (1178–1241) with all the details familiar to every one; and the Latin one of the Dane Saxo Grammaticus (about thirty years earlier), which makes Baldr and Höd heroes instead of Gods, and

completely alters the character of the legend by making a rivalry for Nanna's favour the centre of the plot and cause of the catastrophe. On the Eddic version and on Saxo's depend the theories of Golther, Detter, Niedner and other German scholars on the one hand, and Dr. Frazer on the other.

It has often been pointed out that there is no trace of Baldr-worship in other Germanic nations, nor in any of the Icelandic sagas except the late Frithjofssaga. This, however, is true of other Gods, notably of Tyr, who is without question one of the oldest. The only deities named with any suggestion of sacrifice or worship in the Icelandic sagas proper are Odin, Thor, Frey, Njörd, Frigg and Freyja. The process of choice is as arbitrary in mythology as in other sciences. Again, it is more likely that the original version of the legend should have survived in Iceland than in Denmark, which, being on the mainland, was earlier subject to Christian and Romantic influences; and that a heathen God should, in the two or three centuries following the establishment of Christianity in the North, be turned into a mortal hero, than that the reverse process should have acted at a sufficiently late date to permit of both versions existing side by side in the thirteenth century. A similar gradual elimination of the supernatural may be found in the history of the Volsung myth. Snorri's version is merely an amplification of that in the Elder

Edda, which, scanty as its account of Baldr is, leaves no doubt as to his divinity.

The outline gathered from the poems is as follows: Baldr, Odin's son, is killed by his brother Höd through a mistletoe spray; Loki is in some way concerned in his death, which is an overwhelming misfortune to the Gods; but it is on Höd that his death is avenged. He is burnt on a pyre (Snorri says on his ship, a feature which must come from the Viking age; *Hyndluljod* substitutes howe-burial). He will be absent from the great fight at Ragnarök, but *Völuspa* adds that he will return afterwards. Nanna has nothing to do with the story. The connexion with the hierarchy of the Aesir seems external only, since Baldr has no apparent relation to the great catastrophe as have Odin, Thor, Frey, Tyr and Loki; this, then, would point to the independence of his myth.

The genuineness of the myth seems to depend on whether the mistletoe is an original feature of it or not, and on this point there can be little real doubt. The German theory that Baldr could only be killed by his own sword, which was therefore disguised by enchantment and used against him, and that the Icelandic writers misunderstood this to mean a mistletoe sprig, is far-fetched and romantic, and crumbles at a touch. For if, as it is claimed, the Icelanders had no mistletoe, why should they introduce it into a story to which it did not belong?

They might preserve it by tradition, but they would hardly invent it. Granting this, the mistletoe becomes the central point of the legend. The older mythologists, who only saw in it a sun-myth, overlooked the fact that since any weapon would have done to kill the God with, the mistletoe must have some special significance; and if it is a genuine part of the story, as we have no reason to doubt, it will be hard to overturn Dr. Frazer's theory that the Baldr-myth is a relic of tree-worship and the ritual sacrifice of the God, Baldr being a tree-spirit whose soul is contained in the mistletoe.

The contradictions in the story, especially as told by Snorri (such as the confusion between the parts played by Höd and Loki, and the unsuspicious attitude of the Gods as Loki directs Höd's aim) are sometimes urged against its genuineness. They are rather proofs of antiquity. Apparent contradictions whose explanation is forgotten often survive in tradition; the inventor of a new story takes care to make it consistent. It is probable, however, that there were originally only two actors in the episode, the victim and the slayer, and that Loki's part is later than Höd's, for he really belongs to the Valhall and Ragnarök myth, and was only introduced here as a link. The incident of the oath extracted from everything on earth to protect Baldr, which occurs in Snorri and in a paper MS. of *Baldr's Dreams*, was probably invented to

explain the choice of weapon, which would certainly need explanation to an Icelandic audience. If Dr. Frazer's theory be right, Vali, who slew the slayer, must also have been an original figure in the legend. His antiquity is supported by the fact that he plays the part of avenger in the poems; while in Snorri, where he is mentioned as a God, his absence from the account of Baldr's death is only a part of that literary development by which real responsibility for the murder was transferred from Höd to Loki.

Snorri gives Baldr a son, Forseti (Judge), who is also named as a God in *Grimnismal*. He must have grown out of an epithet of Baldr's, of whom Snorri says that "no one can resist his sentence"; the sacred tree would naturally be the seat of judgment.

The Wanes.—Three of the Norse divinities, Njörd and his son and daughter, are not Aesir by descent. The following account is given of their presence in Asgard:

(1) In *Vafthrudnismal*, Odin asks:

> "Whence came Njörd among the sons of the Aesir? for he was not born of the Aesir."
>
> VAFTHRUDNI. "In Vanaheim wise powers ordained and gave him for a hostage to the Gods; at the doom of the world he shall come back, home to the wise Wanes."

(2) There is an allusion in *Völuspa* to the war which caused the giving of hostages:

> "Odin shot into the host: this was the first war in the world. Broken was the wall of the citadel of the Aesir, so that the Wanes could tread the fields of war."

(3) Loki taunts Njörd with his position, in *Lokasenna*:

> "Thou wast sent from the east as a hostage to the Gods. . . ."
>
> NJÖRD. "This is my comfort, though I was sent from far as a hostage to the Gods, yet I have a son whom no one hates, and he is thought the best of the Aesir."
>
> LOKI. "Stay, Njörd, restrain thy pride; I will hide it no longer: thy son is thine own sister's son, and that is no worse than one would expect."
>
> TYR. "Frey is the best of all the bold riders of Asgard."

There is little doubt that Njörd was once a God of higher importance than he is in the Edda, where he is overshadowed by his son. Grimm's suggestion that he and the goddess Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus, were brother and sister, is supported by the line in *Lokasenna;* it is an isolated reference, and the Goddess has left no other traces in Scandinavian mythology. They were the deities, probably agricultural, of an earlier age, whose adoption by the later Northmen was explained by the story of the compact between Aesir and Vanir. Then

their places were usurped by Frey and Freyja, who were possibly created out of epithets originally applied to the older pair; Njörd was retained with lessened importance, Nerthus passed out altogether. The Edda gives Njörd a giant-bride, Skadi, who was admitted among the Gods in atonement for the slaying of her father Thiazi; she is little more than a name. Frey and Freyja have other marks of agricultural deities, besides their relationship. Nothing is said about Frey's changing shape, but Freyja possesses a hawk-dress which Loki borrows when he wishes to change his form; and, according to Snorri, Frey was sacrificed to for the crops. Njörd has an epithet, "the wealthy," which may have survived from his earlier connexion with the soil. In that case, it would explain why, in Snorri and elsewhere, he is God of the sea and ships, once the province of the ocean-goddess Gefion; the transference is a natural one to an age whose wealth came from the sea.

In spite of their origin, Frey and Freyja become to all intents and purposes Aesir. Frey is to be one of the chief combatants at Ragnarök, with the fire-giant Surt for his antagonist, and a story is told to explain his defeat: he fell in love with Gerd, a giant-maid, and sacrificed his sword to get her; hence he is weaponless at the last fight. Loki alludes to this episode in *Lokasenna:* "With gold didst thou buy Gymi's daughter, and gavest

thy sword for her; but when Muspell's sons ride over Myrkwood, thou shalt not know with what to fight, unhappy one." The story is told in full in *Skirnisför*.

Freyja is called by Snorri "the chief Goddess after Frigg," and the two are sometimes confused. Like her father and brother, she comes into connexion with the giants; she is the beautiful Goddess, and coveted by them. *Völuspa* says that the Gods went into consultation to discuss "who had given the bride of Od (*i.e.*, Freyja) to the giant race"; *Thrymskvida* relates how the giant Thrym bargained for Freyja as the ransom for Thor's hammer, which he had hidden, and how Loki and Thor outwitted him; and Snorri says the giants bargained for her as the price for building Valhalla, but were outwitted. Sir G. W. Dasent notices in the folk-tales the eagerness of trolls and giants to learn the details of the agricultural processes, and this is probably the clue to the desire of the Frost-Giants in the Edda for the possession of Freyja. Idunn, the wife of Bragi, and a purely Norse creation, seems to be a double of Freyja; she, too, according to Snorri, is carried away by the giants and rescued by Loki. The golden apples which she is to keep till Ragnarök remind us of those which Frey offered to Gerd; and the gift of eternal youth, of which they are the symbols, would be appropriate enough to Freyja as an agricultural deity.

The great necklace Brising, stolen by Loki and won back in fight by Heimdal (according to the tenth-century Skalds Thjodulf and Ulf Uggason), is Freyja's property. On this ground, she has been identified with the heroine of *Svipdag and Menglad*, a poem undoubtedly old, though it has only come down in paper MSS. It is in two parts, the first telling how Svipdag aroused the Sibyl Groa, his mother, to give him spells to guard him on his journey; the second describing his crossing the wall of fire which surrounded his fated bride Menglad. If Menglad is really Freyja, the "Necklace-glad," it is a curious coincidence that one poem connects the waverlowe, or ring of fire, with Frey also; for his bride Gerd is protected in the same way, though his servant Skirni goes through it in his place:

> SKIRNI. "Give me the horse that will bear me through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that fights of itself against the giant-race."
>
> FREY. "I give thee the horse that will bear thee through the dark magic waverlowe, and the sword that will fight of itself if he is bold who bears it." (*Skirnisför.*)

The connexion of both with the Midsummer fires, originally part of an agricultural ritual, can hardly be doubted.

Loki, or Lopt, is a strange figure. He is admitted among the Aesir, though not one of them

by birth, and his whole relation to them points to his being an older elemental God. He is in alliance with them against the giants; he and Odin have sworn blood-brothership, according to *Lokasenna*, and he helps Thor to recover his hammer that Asgard may be defended against the giants. On the other hand, while in present alliance with the Gods, he is chief agent in their future destruction, and this they know. In Snorri, he is a mischievous spirit of the fairy-tale kind, exercising his ingenuity alternately in getting the Gods into difficulties, and in getting them out again. So he betrays Idunn to the giants, and delivers her; he makes the bargain by which Freyja is promised to the giant-builders of Valhalla, and invents the trick by which they are cheated of their prize; by killing the otter he endangers his own head, Odin's and Hoeni's, and he obtains the gold which buys their atonement. Hence, in the systematising of the Viking religion, the responsibility for Baldr's death also was transferred to him. At the coming of the fire-giants at Ragnarök, he is to steer the ship in which Muspell's sons sail (*Völuspa*), further evidence of his identity as a fire-spirit. Like his son the Wolf, he is chained by the Gods; the episode is related in a prose-piece affixed to *Lokasenna:*

"After that Loki hid himself in Franangr's Foss, in the form of a salmon. There the Aesir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Nari, but his

son Narfi was changed into a wolf. Skadi took a poisonous snake and fastened it up over Loki's face, and the poison dropped down. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a cup under the poison. But when it was full she poured the poison away, and meanwhile poison dropped on Loki, and he struggled so hard that all the earth shook; those are called earthquakes now."

Völuspa inserts lines corresponding to this passage after the Baldr episode, and Snorri makes it a consequence of Loki's share in that event.

He is more especially agent of the doom through his children: at Ragnarök, Fenri the Wolf, bound long before by Tyr's help, will be freed, and swallow the sun (*Vafthrudnismal*) and Odin (*Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa*); and Jörmungandr, the Giant-Snake, will rise from the sea where he lies curled round the world, to slay and be slain by Thor. The dragon's writhing in the waves is one of the tokens to herald Ragnarök, and his battle with Thor is the fiercest combat of that day. Only *Völuspa* of our poems gives any account of it: "Then comes the glorious son of Hlodyn, Odin's son goes to meet the serpent; Midgard's guardian slays him in his rage, but scarcely can Earth's son reel back nine feet from the dragon."

When Thor goes fishing with the giant Hymi, he terrifies his companion by dragging the snake's head out of the sea, but he does not slay it; it must wait there till Ragnarök:

"The protector of men, the only slayer of the Serpent, baited his hook with the ox's head. The God-hated one who girds all lands from below swallowed the bait. Doughtily pulled mighty Thor the poison-streaked serpent up to the side; he struck down with his hammer the hideous head of the wolf's companion. The monster roared, the wilderness resounded, the old earth shuddered all through. The fish sank back into the sea. Gloomy was the giant when they rowed back, so that he spoke not a word."

There is nothing to suggest that Jörmungandr, to whom the word World-Snake (Midgardsorm) always refers in the Edda, is the same as Nidhögg, the serpent that gnaws at Yggdrasil's roots; but both are relics of Snake-worship.

The World-Ash, generally called Yggdrasil's Ash, is one of the most interesting survivals of tree-worship. It is described by the Sibyl in *Völuspa:* "I know an ash called Yggdrasil, a high tree sprinkled with white moisture (thence come the dews that fall in the dales): it stands ever-green by Urd's spring. Thence come three maids, all-knowing, from the hall that stands under the tree"; and as a sign of the approaching doom she says: "Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands; the old tree groans." *Grimnismal* says that the Gods go every day to hold judgment by the ash, and describes it further:

"Three roots lie three ways under Yggdrasil's ash:
Hel dwells under one, the frost-giants under the second,

mortal men under the third. The squirrel is called Ratatosk who shall run over Yggdrasil's ash; he shall carry down the eagle's words, and tell them to Nidhögg below. There are four harts, with necks thrown back, who gnaw off the shoots. . . . More serpents lie under Yggdrasil's ash than any one knows. Ofni and Svafni I know will ever gnaw at the tree's twigs. Yggdrasil's ash suffers more hardships than men know: the hart bites above, the side decays, and Nidhögg gnaws below. . . . Yggdrasil's ash is the best of trees."

The snake and the tree are familiar in other mythologies, though in most other cases the snake is the protector, while here he is the destroyer. Both Nidhögg and Jörmungandr are examples of the destroying dragon rather than the treasure-guardian. The Ash is the oracle: the judgment-place of the Gods, the dwelling of the Fates, the source of the spring of knowledge.

Ragnarök.—The Twilight of the Gods (or Doom of the Gods) is the central point of the Viking religion. The Regin (of which *Ragna* is genitive plural) are the ruling powers, often called Ginnregin (the great Gods), Uppregin (the high Gods), Thrymregin (the warrior Gods). The word is commonly used of the Aesir in *Völuspa;* in *Alvissmal* the Regin seem to be distinguished from both Aesir and Vanir. The whole story of the Aesir is overshadowed by knowledge of this coming doom, the time when they shall meet foes more terrible than the giants,

and fall before them; their constant effort is to learn what will happen then, and to gather their forces together to meet it. The coming Ragnarök is the reason for the existence of Valhalla with its hosts of slain warriors; and of all the Gods, Odin, Thor, Tyr and Loki are most closely connected with it. Two poems of the verse Edda describe it:

(1) *Vafthrudnismal:*

V. "What is the plain called where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle?"

O. "Vigrid is the name of the place where Surt and the blessed Gods shall meet in battle. It is a hundred miles every way; it is their destined battle-field."

. . . . . .

O. "Whence shall the sun come on the smooth heaven when Fenri has destroyed this one?"

V. "Before Fenri destroy her, the elf-beam shall bear a daughter: that maid shall ride along her mother's paths, when the Gods perish."

O. "Which of the Aesir shall rule over the realms of the Gods, when Surt's fire is quenched?"

V. "Vidar and Vali shall dwell in the sanctuary of the Gods when Surt's fire is quenched. Modi and Magni shall have Mjöllni at the end of Vingni's (*i.e.*, Thor's) combat."

O. "What shall be Odin's end, when the Gods perish?"

V. "The Wolf will swallow the father of men; Vidar will avenge it. He will cleave the Wolf's cold jaws in the battle."

(2) *Völuspa:*

"A hag sits eastward in Ironwood and rears Fenri's children; one of them all, in troll's shape, shall be the

sun's destroyer. He shall feed on the lives of death-doomed men; with red blood he shall redden the seat of the Gods. The sunshine shall grow black, all winds will be unfriendly in the after-summers. . . . I see further in the future the great Ragnarök of the Gods of Victory. . . . Heimdal blows loudly, the horn is on high; Yggdrasil's ash trembles as it stands, the old tree groans."

The following lines tell of the fire-giants and the various combats, and the last section of the poem deals with a new world when Baldr, Höd and Hoeni are to come back to the dwelling-place of the Gods.

The whole points to a belief in the early destruction of the world and the passing away of the old order of things. Whether the new world which *Vafthrudnismal* and *Völuspa* both prophesy belongs to the original idea or not is a disputed point. Probably it does not; at all events, none of the old Aesir, according to the poems, are to survive, for Modi and Magni are not really Gods at all, Baldr, Höd and Vali belong to another myth, Hoeni had passed out of the hierarchy by his exchange with Njörd, and Vidar's origin is obscure.

The Einherjar, the great champions or chosen warriors, are intimately connected with Ragnarök. All warriors who fall in battle are taken to Odin's hall of the slain, Valhalla. According to *Grimnismal,* he "chooses every day men dead by the

sword"; his Valkyries ride to battle to give the victory and bring in the fallen. Hence Odin is the giver of victory. Loki in *Lokasenna* taunts him with giving victory to the wrong side: "Thou hast never known how to decide the battle among men. Thou hast often given victory to those to whom thou shouldst not give it, to the more cowardly"; this, no doubt, was in order to secure the best fighters for Valhalla. That the defeated side sometimes consoled themselves with this explanation of a notable warrior's fall is proved by the tenth-century dirge on Eirik Bloodaxe, where Sigmund the Volsung asks in Valhalla: "Why didst thou take the victory from him, if thou thoughtest him brave?" and Odin replies: "Because it is uncertain when the grey Wolf will come to the seat of the Gods." There are similar lines in Eyvind's dirge on Hakon the Good. In this way a host was collected ready for Ragnarök: for *Grimnismal* says: "There are five hundred doors and eighty in Valhalla; eight hundred Einherjar will go out from each door, when they go to fight the wolf." Meanwhile they fight and feast: "All the Einherjar in Odin's courts fight every day: they choose the slain and ride from the battle, and sit then in peace together" (*Vafthrudnismal*), and the Valkyries bear ale to them (*Grimnismal*).

It is often too hastily assumed that the Norse Ragnarök with the dependant Valhalla system are

in great part the outcome of Christian influence: of an imitation of the Christian Judgment Day and the Christian heaven respectively. Owing to the lateness of our material, it is, of course, impossible to decide how old the beliefs may be, but it is likely that the Valhalla idea only took form at the systematising of the mythology in the Viking age. The belief in another world for the dead is, however, by no means exclusively Christian, and a reference in *Grimnismal* suggests the older system out of which, under the influence of the Ragnarök idea, Valhalla was developed. The lines, "The ninth hall is Folkvang, where Freyja rules the ordering of seats in the hall; half the slain she chooses every day, Odin has the other half," are an evident survival of a belief that all the dead went to live with the Gods, Odin having the men, and Freyja (or more probably Frigg) the women; the idea being here confused with the later system, under which only those who fell in battle were chosen by the Gods. Christian colouring appears in the last lines of *Völuspa* and in Snorri, where men are divided into the "good and moral," who go after death to a hall of red gold, and the "perjurers and murderers," who are sent to a hall of snakes.

For Ragnarök also a heathen origin is at least as probable as a Christian one. I would suggest as a possibility that the expectation of the Twilight of

the Gods may have grown out of some ritual connected with the eclipse, such as is frequent among heathen races. Such ceremonies are a tacit acknowledgment of a doubt, and if they ever existed among the Scandinavians, the possibility, ever present to the savage mind, of a time when his efforts to help the light might be fruitless, and the darkness prove the stronger, would be the germ of his more civilised descendant's belief in Ragnarök.

By turning to the surviving poems of the Skalds, whose dates can be approximately reckoned from the sagas, we can fix an inferior limit for certain of the legends given above, placing them definitely in the heathen time. Reference has already been made to the corroboration of the Valhalla belief supplied by the elegies on Eirik Bloodaxe and Hakon the Good. In the former (which is anonymous, but must have been written soon after 950, since it was composed, on Eirik's death, by his wife's orders), Odin commands the Einherjar and Valkyries to prepare for the reception of the slain Eirik and his host, since no one knows how soon the Gods will need to gather their forces together for the great contest. Eyvind's dirge on Hakon (who fell in 970) is an imitation of this: Odin sends two Valkyries to choose a king to enter his service in Valhalla; they find Hakon on the battle-field, and he is slain with many of his followers. Great

preparation is made in Valhalla for his reception, and the poet ends by congratulating Hakon (who, though a Christian, having been educated in England, had not interfered with the heathen altars and sacrifices) on the toleration which has secured him such a welcome. A still earlier poet, Hornklofi, writing during the reign of Harald Fairhair (who died in 933), alludes to the slain as the property of "the one-eyed husband of Frigg."

Several Skalds mention legends of Thor: his fishing for the World-Snake is told by Bragi (who from his place in genealogies must have written before 900), and by Ulf Uggason and Eystein Valdason, both in the second half of the tenth century; and Thjodulf and Eilif (the former about 960, the latter a little later) tell tales of his fights with the giants. Turning to the other Gods, Egil Skallagrimsson (about 970) names Frey and Njörd as the givers of wealth; Bragi tells the story of Gefion's dragging the island of Zealand out of Lake Wener into the sea; and Ulf Uggason speaks of Heimdal's wrestling with Loki.

The legend of Idunn is told by Thjodulf much as Snorri tells it: Odin, Hoeni and Loki, while on a journey, kill and roast an ox. The giant Thiazi swoops down in eagle's shape and demands a share; Loki strikes the eagle, who flies off with him, releasing him only on condition that he will betray to the giants Idunn, "the care-healing maid who

understands the renewal of youth." He does so, and the Gods, who grow old and withered for want of her apples, force him to go and bring her back to Asgard.

The poet of *Eiriksmal*, quoted above, alludes to the Baldr myth: Bragi, hearing the approach of Eirik and his host, asks "What is that thundering and tramping, as if Baldr were coming back to Odin's hall?" The funeral pyre of Baldr is described by Ulf Uggason: he is burnt on his ship, which is launched by a giantess, in the presence of Frey, Heimdal, Odin and the Valkyries.

Though heathen writers ontside of Scandinavia are lacking, references to Germanic heathendom fortunately survive in several Continental Christian historians of earlier date than any of our Scandinavian sources. The evidence of these, though scanty, is corroborative, and the allusions are in striking agreement with the Edda stories in tone and character.

Odin (Wodanus) is always identified by these writers with the Roman Mercurius (whom Tacitus named as the chief German God). This identification occurs in the eighth-century Paulus Diaconus, and in Jonas of Bobbio (first half of the seventh century), and probably rests on Odin's character as a wandering God (Mercury being διάκτορος), his disguises, and his patronage of poetry and eloquence (as Mercury is λόγιος). Odin

is not himself in general the conductor of dead souls (ψυχοπομπός), like the Roman God, his attendant Valkyries performing the office for him. The equation is only comprehensible on the presumption of the independence of Germanic mythology, and cannot be explained by transmission. For if Odin were in any degree an imitation of the Roman deity, other notable attributes of the latter would have been assigned to him: whereas in the Edda the thieving God (κλέπτης) is not Odin but Loki, and the founder of civilisation is Heimdal.

The legend of the origin of the Lombards given by Paulus Diaconus illustrates the relations of Odin and Frigg. The Vandals asked Wodan (Odin) to grant them victory over the Vinili; the latter made a similar prayer to Frea (Frigg), the wife of Wodan. She advised them to make their wives tie their hair round their faces like beards, and go with them to meet Wodan in the morning. They did so, and Wodan exclaimed, "Who are these *Long-beards?*" Then Frea said that having given the Vinili a name, he must give them the victory (as Helgi in the Edda claims a gift from Svava when she names him). As in *Grimnismal*, Odin and Frigg are represented as supporting rival claims, and Frigg gains the day for her favourites by superior cunning. This legend also shows Odin as the giver of victory.

Few heathen legends are told however by these

early Christian writers, and the Gods are seldom called by their German names. An exception is the Frisian Fosite mentioned by Alcuin (who died 804) and by later writers; he is to be identified with the Norse Forseti, the son of (probably at first an epithet of) Baldr, but no legend of him is told. It is disappointing that these writers should have said so little of any God except the chief one. A very characteristic touch survives in Gregory of Tours (died 594), when the Frank Chlodvig tells his Christian wife that the Christian God "cannot be proved to be of the race of the Gods," an idea entirely in keeping with the Eddic hierarchy. Before leaving the Continental historians, reference may be made to the abundant evidence of Germanic tree-worship to be gathered from them. The holy oak mentioned by Wilibald (before 786), the sacred pear-tree of Constantius (473), with numerous others, supply parallels to the World-Ash which is so important a feature of Norse mythology.

A study of this subject would be incomplete without some reference to the mythology of Saxo Grammaticus. His testimony on the old religion is unwilling, and his effort to discredit it very evident. The bitterness of his attack on Frigg especially suggests that she was, among the Northmen, a formidable rival to the Virgin. When he repeats a legend of the Gods, he transforms them into

mortal heroes, and when, as often happens, he refers to them accidentally as Gods, he invariably hastens to protest that he does so only because it had been the custom. He describes Thor and Odin as men versed in sorcery who claimed the rank of Gods; and in another passage he speaks of the latter as a king who had his seat at Upsala, and who was falsely credited with divinity throughout Europe. His description of Odin agrees with that in the Edda: an old man of great stature and mighty in battle, one-eyed, wearing a great cloak, and constantly wandering about in disguise. The story which Saxo tells of his driving into battle with Harald War-tooth, disguised as the latter's charioteer Brun, and turning the fight against him by revealing to his enemy Ring the order of battle which he had invented for Harald's advantage, is in thorough agreement with the traditional character of the God who betrayed Sigmund the Volsung and Helgi Hundingsbane. Saxo's version of the Baldr story has been mentioned already. Baldr's transformation into a hero (who could only be slain by a sword in the keeping of a wood-satyr) is almost complete. But Odin and Thor and all the Gods fight for him against his rival Hother; "so that it might be called a battle of Gods against men"; and Nanna's excuse to Baldr that "a God could not wed with a mortal," preserves a trace of his origin. The chained Loki appears in Saxo as

Utgarda-Loki, lying bound in a cavern of snakes, and worshipped as a God by the Danish king Gorm Haraldsson. Dr. Rydberg sees the Freyja myth in Saxo's story of Syritha, who was carried away by the giants and delivered by her lover Othar (the Od of the Edda): an example, like *Svipdag and Menglad*, of the complete transformation of a divine into an heroic myth. In almost all cases Saxo vulgarises the stories in the telling, a common result when a mythical tale is retold by a Christian writer, though it is still more conspicuous in his versions of the heroic legends.

APPENDIX

THRYMSKVIDA.

1. THEN Wing-Thor was angry when he awoke, and missed his hammer. He shook his beard, he tossed his hair, the son of Earth groped about for it.

2. And first of all he spoke these words: "Hear now, Loki, what I tell thee, a thing that no one in earth or heaven above has heard: the Asa has been robbed of his hammer!"

3. They went to the dwelling of fair Freyja, and these words he spoke first of all: "Wilt thou lend me, Freyja, thy feather dress, to see if I can find my hammer?"

4. FREYJA. "I would give it thee, though it were of gold; I would grant it, though it were of silver."

5. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Asgard and into Jötunheim.

6. Thrym, lord of the Giants, sat on a howe; he twisted golden bands for his greyhounds and trimmed his horses' manes.

7. THRYM. "How is it with the Aesir? How is it with the Elves? Why art thou come alone into Jötunheim?"

LOKI. "It is ill with the Aesir, it is ill with the Elves; hast thou hidden the Thunderer's hammer?"

8. THRYM. "I have hidden the Thunderer's hammer eight miles below the earth. No man shall bring it back, unless he bring me Freyja to wife."

9. Then Loki flew, the feather-coat rustled, until he came out of Jötunheim and into Asgard. Thor met

him in the middle of the court, and these words he spoke first:

10. "Hast thou news in proportion to thy toil? Tell me from on high thy distant tidings, for a sitting man often breaks down in his story, and he who lies down falls into falsehood."

11. LOKI. "I bring news for my toil: Thrym, lord of the Giants, has thy hammer; no man shall bring it back, unless he take him Freyja as a bride."

12. They went to see fair Freyja, spoke to her first of all these words: "Bind on the bridal veil, Freyja, we two must drive to Jötunheim."

13. Angry then was Freyja; she panted, so that all the hall of the Aesir trembled, and the great Brising necklace fell: "Eager indeed for marriage wouldst thou think me, if I should drive with thee to Jötunheim."

14. Then all the Aesir went into council, and all the Asynjor to consultation, and the mighty Gods discussed how they should recover the Thunderer's hammer.

15. Then spoke Heimdal, whitest of the Aesir; he could see into the future like the Vanir: "Let us bind on Thor the bridal veil; let him have the great necklace Brising.

16. "Let the keys jingle, and let women's weeds fall about his knees; let us put broad stones on his breast, and a hood dexterously on his head."

17. Then spoke Thor, the mighty Asa: "Vile would the Aesir call me, if I let the bridal veil be bound on me."

18. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son: "Speak not such words, Thor! soon will the Giants dwell in Asgard, unless thou bring home thy hammer."

19. Then they bound on Thor the bridal veil, and the great necklace Brising; they let the keys jingle and women's weeds fall about his knees, and they put broad

stones on his breast, and the hood dexterously on his head.

20. Then spoke Loki, Laufey's son: "I also will go with thee as thy maiden; we two will drive together to Jötunheim."

21. Then the goats were driven out, urged forward in their harness; well must they run. Rocks were riven, the earth burned in flame: Odin's son was driving into Jötunheim.

22. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants: "Stand up, giants, and strew the benches! They are bringing me now Freyja my bride, Njörd's daughter from Noatun.

23. "Gold-horned kine run in the court, oxen all-black, the giant's delight. I have many treasures, I have many jewels, Freyja only is lacking."

24. The guests assembled early in the evening, and ale was carried to the Giants. One ox did Sif's husband eat, and eight salmon, and all the dishes prepared for the women; three casks of mead he drank.

25. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants: "Who ever saw a bride eat so eagerly? I never saw a bride make such a hearty meal, nor a maid drink so deep of mead."

26. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's words: "Eight nights has Freyja eaten nothing, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

27. He looked under the veil, he longed to kiss the bride, but he started back the length of the hall: "Why are Freyja's eyes so terrible? Fire seems to burn from her eyes."

28. The prudent handmaid sat near, and she found answer to the Giant's speech: "Eight nights has Freyja had no sleep, so eager was she to be in Jötunheim."

29. In came the Giants' wretched sister, she dared to ask for a bridal gift: "Take from thine arms the red rings, if thou wouldst gain my love, my love and all my favour."

30. Then spoke Thrym, lord of the Giants : "Bring the hammer to hallow the bride. Lay Mjöllni on the maiden's knee, hallow us two in wedlock."

31. The Thunderer's heart laughed in his breast, when the bold of soul felt the hammer. Thrym killed he first, the lord of the Giants, and all the race of the Giants he struck.

32. He slew the Giants' aged sister, who had asked him for a bridal gift. She got a blow instead of shillings, and a stroke of the hammer for abundance of rings. So Odin's son got back his hammer.

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(2) *Snorra Edda.*—The most recent edition of the whole is Dr. Finnur Jónsson's (Copenhagen, 1875). There is a useful edition of the mythological portions (*i.e.*, *Gylfaginning*, *Bragarœdur*, and the narrative parts of *Skaldskaparmal*) by Ernst Wilken (*Die Prosäische Edda*, Paderborn, 1878).

(3) *Dictionaries and Grammars.*—For the study of the Poetic Edda, Gering's *Glossar zu den Liedern der Edda* (Paderborn, 1896) will be found most useful; it is com-

plete and trustworthy, and in small compass. A similar service has been performed for *Snorra Edda* in Wilken's *Glossar* (Paderborn, 1883), which forms a second volume to his edition, mentioned above. Both are, of course, in German. The only English dictionary is the lexicon of Cleasby and Vigfusson (Oxford).

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II. Translations.

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III. Modern Authorities.

To the works on Northern mythology mentioned below in the note on the Baldr theories, must be added Dr. Rydberg's *Teutonic Mythology* (English version by R. B. Anderson, London, 1889), which devotes special attention to Saxo.

NOTES

HOME OF THE EDDA. (Page 2.)

THE chief apologists for the British theory are Professor Bugge (*Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen*, München, 1889), and the editors of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (see the Introduction to that work, and also the Prolegomena prefixed to their edition of the *Sturlunga Saga*, Oxford). The case for Norway and Greenland is argued by Dr. Finnur Jónsson (*Den oldnorske og oldislandske Literaturs - Historie*, Copenhagen). The cases for both British and Norwegian origin are based chiefly on rather fanciful arguments from supposed local colour. The theory of the *Corpus Poeticum* editors that many of the poems were composed in the Scottish isles is discredited by the absence of Gaelic words or traces of Gaelic legend. Professor Bugge's North of England theory is slightly stronger, being supported by several Old English expressions in the poems, but these are not enough to prove that they were composed in England, since most Icelanders travelled east at some time of their lives.

(Page 3.)

A later study will deal with the Heroic legends.

YNGLINGA SAGA. (Page 3.)

Ynglinga Saga is prefixed to the Lives of the Kings in the collection known as *Heimskringla* (edited by Unger, Christiania, 1868, and by Finnur Jónsson, Christiania, 1893); there is an English translation in Laing's *Lives of the Kings of Norway* (London, 1889).

VÖLUSPA. (Page 4.)

A poem of similar form occurs among the heroic poems. *Gripisspa*, a prophetic outline of Sigurd's life, introduces the Volsung poems, as *Völuspa* does the Asgard cycle.

RIDDLE-POEMS. (Page 6.)

So many of the mythological poems are in this form that they suggest the question, did the asking of riddles form any part of Scandinavian ritual?

THE AESIR. (Page 11.)

Ynglinga Saga says that Odin and the Aesir came to Norway from Asia; a statement due, of course, to a false etymology, though theories as to the origin of Norse mythology have been based on it.

TYR. (Page 12.)

Tyr is etymologically identical with Zeus, and with the Sanskrit Dyaus (Sky-God).

BALDR. (Pages 16 to 22.)

The Baldr theories are stated in the following authorities:

(1) Ritual origin: Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 3.

(2) Heroic origin: Golther, *Handbuch der Germanischen Mythologie* (Leipzig, 1895); Niedner, *Eddische Fragen* (*Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, new series, 29), *Zur Lieder-Edda* (*Zeitschr. f. d. Alt.* vol. 36).

(3) Solar myth: Sir G. W. Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations* (London, 1870); Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 4.

(4) Borrowed: Bugge, *Studien über die Entstehung der nordischen Götter- und Heldensagen* (transl. Brenner, München, 1889).

VEGTAMSKVIDA. (Page 17.)

The word *hroðrbaðm* (which I have given as "branch of fame") would perhaps be more accurately translated "tree of fame," which Gering explains as a kenning for Baldr. But there are no kennings of the same sort in the poem, and the line would have no meaning. If it refers to the mistletoe, as most commentators agree, it merely shows that the poet was ignorant of the nature of the plant, which would be in favour of its antiquity, rather than the reverse.

SAXO GRAMMATICUS. (Page 18.)

English translation by Professor Elton (London, D. Nutt, 1894). As Saxo's references to the old Gods are made in much the same sympathetic tone as that adopted by Old Testament writers towards heathen deities, his testimony on mythological questions is of the less value.

THE MISTLETOE. (Page 20.)

It seems incredible that any writers should turn to the

travesty of the Baldr story given in the almost worthless saga of Hromund Gripsson in support of a theory. In it "Bildr" is killed by Hromund, who has the sword Mistilteinn. It must be patent to any one that this is a perverted version of a story which the narrator no longer understood.

LOKI. (Page 26.)

It is hardly necessary to point out the parallel between Loki and Prometheus, also both helper and enemy of the Gods, and agent in their threatened fall, though in the meantime a prisoner. In character Loki has more in common with the mischievous spirit described by Hesiod, than with the heroic figure of Aeschylus. The struggles of Loki (p. 28) find a parallel in those of the fire-serpent Typhon, to which the Greeks attributed earthquakes.

ECLIPSE RITUAL. (Page 35.)

Mr. Lang, in *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (London, 1887), gives examples of eclipse ritual. Grimm, in the *Teutonic Mythology*, vol. 2, quotes Finnish and Lithuanian myths about sun-devouring beasts, very similar to the Fenri myth.

THE SKALDS. (Page 35.)

All the Skaldic verses will be found, with translations, in the *Corpus Poeticum*.

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